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THE INDIA CULTURES QUARTERLY

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NOTICE

Foreign (outside India) readers are invited to become permanent subscribers to THE INDIA CULTURES QUARTERLY, which aims to record factual information of use to students interested in the cultures of India. Please note the low annual fee which has been adjusted to the cost price of printing and mailing, on a non-profit basis.

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Readers in India are advised that the subscription fee is Rs 2 for salaries of Rs 200 or less, and Rs 4 for salaries of Rs 201 or more. Note that henceforth Dr R. D. Immanuel will be in charge of editorial matters (as in the past), and Dr H. H. Presler will be responsible for the Mid-India feature and assisting with the business details.

THE MID-INDIA REGION

By Dr Henry H. Presler

Note: This regular feature of the India Cultures Quarterly embodies the findings of contemporary field research, and proposes hypotheses. The approach is from the standpoint of the social sciences as applied to the understanding of human cultures. The following paper will show workers in India how to investigate and comprehend the urban religious institution. 'There is more to be learned than meets the eye'.

Institutional Shifts in Religious Affiliation

In this instalment I present stories of public sacred buildings that have been used by more than one of the major living religions of India. A temple ceases to be called a temple, and becomes the sanctuary of another religion; a saint's grave with a clientele belonging exclusively to one religion, becomes the responsibility and symbol of another religion. Yet, adherents of the first religion continue to reside around the structure acquiescing in its transfer.

Is this a rare or a common phenomenon in mid-India? My analysis of about 4,500 local institutions suggests that one per cent change their affiliation. My data include both private and public institutions; these shifts generally fall in the public category, making their significance greater than suggested by the percentage.

Have such institutional shifts been described in print hitherto? Any such have not come to my notice. Possibly this short paper opens a discussion of a variable so far escaping attention.

By what method has the information been assembled? No single method has been used, rather a combination of the several methods recognized in social science field research, with emphasis upon the case study approach. What is the case? The answer is, Not the single institution under scrutiny but its total cultural and land setting. The history of an area must be discovered, as well as the human ecology thereof. As these institutions occur in an urban context, a scientific analysis of the city is essential.

In the following descriptions, real institutions and the three numerically largest religions of India are not named, as ours is a scientific procedure. We are not helped by proper names in our effort to grasp underlying causation; it is the type, not the particular, the generalization, not the unit that we wish to perceive. Instead, we call these three living religions by the anonymous letters, A, B, C, and the institutions are called sacred locations one and two. The term 'sacred location' suggests several factors, namely, the tendency in India for a spot to persist in sanctity and inviolability against urban forces that usually overwhelm religious institutions in the West; it suggests that a spot becomes an idea of the secred, a definition of the sacred,

in the public mind, so that a change of religion is less important than the preservation of that sacred spot in some sanctified form or other; it suggests that the ultimate datum for this problem is not the institution, but that particular spot in the midst of those land use changes and population shifts characteristic of urbanism.

The reader should realize at the outset that no written records are available; this population is 85 per cent illiterate today, and had a higher illiteracy rate in the past. Religious institutions keep no written records of their procedures, and do not so much as conceive of 'secretaries' minutes,' or 'treasurers' accounts'. There is no written history of this elongated amalgamation of scattered villages now called a city. Court records of land transfers do exist, but not in a form meaningful for this problem. Yet, oral history has been developed by illiterates to a point of dependability which, in my opinion, is often higher than the garbled documents in school books of a modern state. The scandal of re-writing history after each political upheaval is not conducive to veridity. It is easier for one man at his typwriter to tell an historical lie than for my informant surrounded by thirty of his fellows as auditors. This paragraph intends to convey my confidence in the facts about to be reported.

Sacred Location One

Astonishment is the only reaction possible to a citizen on being told that this sanctuary belongs to Religion C, has a membership of C, a functionary of C, and is in all of its activities C. The 300 year old building is obviously in the architectural style of Religion A. There are several thousand local A sanctuaries which look like this C sanctuary, having the same general dimensions, shape, dome, crenellation, corbel, and orientation towards the east. Sacred Location One is of the limited size intended for the individual devotee coming at random times, whereas the C religion requires congregational exercises in a large auditorium. There is probably no other sanctuary of religion C in this city (or anywhere else in mid-India for that matter) that resembles this one from the outside.

Should the citizen express disbelief in the claim that this Religion-A-appearing-sanctuary is actually a holy place of Religion C, he would be forced to retract his words on going inside. If outside architecture could not be changed, the interior and its movable symbols have been altered. The pedistals, statues, utensils, noise producing paraphernalia, liquids, offerings, kinds of incense and sorts of practices the citizen was preconditioned by the architectural exterior to expect, have vanished. A different set of accounterments (those customary to Religion C) are to be seen. In the first place, the usual one-room interior of Religion A has been divided into three diminutive rooms necessary to C, by partitions obviously of late origin. The carpets, tables, table cloths, stools, pillows and lace are categorically not seen in A sanctuaries

of this city. The pictures on the walls are 100 per cent of the C religion, duplicates of the framed portraits seen in the local C sacristies. The *coup d'etat* to the citizen's vanishing doubt is the large volume on the altar under the silken cloth: the scriptures of C.

A well-dressed and full-time functionary with pleasant appearance and specifically religious training, approaches with his assistant. Religion A's institutions, in 95 per cent of the public units, lack such functionaries, and are staffed by volunteers who earn their bread in the secular world, giving part time to religious rituals, and with no formal training. Assistants do not appear in 99 per cent of the Religion A public institutions, and are never of the travelling teacher variety now greeting us. The head functionary lives in a small house to the west of Sacred Location One, and in the same compound, whereas at A institutions the functionaries usually live in distant and private homes.

Inquiry as to the festival days confirms Religion C here: All holy days are of that faith. As the day's devotees assemble we see constumes and symbols characteristic of C. Our minds are ready to accept this proposition: Whereas Sacred Location One has every exterior trait of sanctuaries belonging to Religion A, its interior appointments and personnel are unquestionably of Religion C. Our curiosity increases while watching the congregational service, in which the majority of devotees, lacking the expansive auditorium of their ancestral requirements, sit outside on the platform and overflow on to the ground.

What, then, is the explanation for this institutional shift in religious affiliation?

Importance of Historical Investigation

Three hundred years ago (the age claimed for this building, and confirmed by similar buildings of the same style) different political and ecological orders prevailed. Mid-India was under the suzerainty of the Gond tribe (now numbering about two million according to recent census figures). Gondwana was the name given to their kingdoms (there having been four such in loose federation), a tract of mountainous jungle inaccessible to the technology of earlier armies.[1] Most of India's history printed in textbooks flowed around Mid-India, not through it. Gondwana remained an island of aloofness, an impenetrable wild of aboriginals who left only one piece of writing in the form of a plaque on a palace wall, and that by a Sanskrit pandit employed to record the geneologies of a Gond dynasty.[2]

[1] Asaf Khan's incursion and defeat of the Gonds was accomplished by light cavalry and gunpowder against Gond elephants and arrows. It was a temporary victory won by a single branch of a medieval Indian army, and could not be maintained even so; after a brief stay, Asaf Khan had to withdraw.

[2] At Rampur near Mandla, M.P.

There is little in English about Gondwana. From the Hindi accounts, oral traditions, and archeological remains, I have come to the hypothesis that the master minds of Gondwana were not Gonds. The rulers that pulled together a tribal state out of scattered jungle villages, were Rajputs who had fled southwards before the Moghuls. These warriors would not submit, and being unable to conquer their invaders, disappeared into mid-India by themselves invading the territory of the Gonds.

They succeeded in establishing a political order that endured for upwards of five hundred years, led by several dynasties.

Safe in their jungle obscurity the kings of the Gonds exhibited two characteristics that are pertinent here.

First, they undertook a series of remarkable engineering works, namely, the construction of permanent bodies of water, called *talab* (tank), and *talaiya* (small tank). Tradition claims fifty-two such were constructed in the environs being described.[1] Why did the Gonds construct these water bodies? After examining the remains of the major Gond ruins in the district, I conclude that Gond rajas preferred to establish their forts and palaces on the tops of small mountains, probably because of the military technology of their era. They built tanks to store water during siege. Another reason was aesthetic: Whenever possible they built an island in the middle of the tank with a pleasant residence for their queens, and there are many myths about boating habits. Once they had built a few such tanks, the picturesque water bodies became prestige symbols, each prince trying to outdo his father in building a bigger tank, with the result that some of them could have had no militay value whatever, being in near by plains. Possibly irrigation was a factor in the construction of the latter, because the northernmost Gond kingdom had its capital in the west end of the city under discussion, and archeological remains suggest a relatively large population for those days, requiring considerable food.

Besides these general reasons for building tanks, the Gonds were confronted with a local reason, to wit: The banks of the Nerbudda River within five miles of the capital site, do not carry any elevation or prometory or river bend allowing of fortifications. But five miles north of the river is an excellent outcropping of igneous rocks, rising abruptly above the plains. This outcropping is about two miles in diameter and some 1,500 feet high, very irregular in formation and offering extremely difficult terrain to an invader. Moreover, the outcropping is large enough to assemble during the monsoon season, a large run-off through many natural and beautiful gullies, falling into the declivities characteristic of rugged land. Even before the days of the Gonds, there were ponds and lakelets extending on all sides,

[1] I have made it my business to visit all fifty-two alleged constructions of the Gond rajas, and find that informants cannot entirely agree on which were the fifty-two. This leads to another observation that there have been more than fifty-two tanks in this urban context.

rather shallow and in some places not much more than swamps. By a carefully planned system of dams and canals, the Gond kings succeeded in massing the waters in smaller enclosures whose banks were built with large blocks of carefully cut stone that only considerable numbers of skilled workmen and prolonged periods of peace could have assembled.

Sacred Location One is situated on the east bank of one such lakelet. In those days this particular lakelet was about five miles east of the Gond capitol, beyond its residential area. The site was that of an outlying, indefensible village. The lakelet was natural, not artificial; it was one of those that the Gond kings did not have to control with a dam. But it partook of the official favour extended towards all water bodies by the prevailing government. The lakelet was lined with institutions preferred by those native princes, which brings me to their next pertinent characteristic.

Importance of Cultural Content

Second, the Gond kings favoured Religion A, and not the religion of their subjects. Religion A had prestige then as now, a body of upper class adherents, a noble philosophy, and a national influence. The warrior kings had brought a variety of A with them into mid-India, and intended to hold to it. The Gond religion, on the contrary, had no edifices and no perament symbols. The sanctuary of the Gond was the saj tree, with symbols of sacred grass, spear and vermillion, artifacts that quickly succumb to the elements. Religion A had stately towers of quarried granite and marble (both available locally). The point is that the Gond kings made it their business to construct Religion A sanctuaries on the banks of their tanks. They encouraged nobles who did likewise, and in consequence a few temple plaques in the valley carry the names of such benefactors, the oldest being about 210 years backwards in time. We do not know precisely who built Sacred Location One, but we do know the name of the divinity installed.

That the Moon Goddess statue was placed here raises the question, Why this divinity and not another? The Gond rajas favoured a male divinity whose symbol is to be seen in most of their remaining institutions. The Moon Goddess is not a major divinity with the Gonds, either. In some of their villages about sixty miles south I fail to find the Moon Goddess. In the city being considered, however, there are certain contemporary streets formerly the main lanes of Gond villages, with enduring shrines to the Moon Goddess. Although most Gonds fled from the city during the Fist War of Independence in 1857 when the British victory seemed assured, they left behind them enduring traditions, one of which is that the local *gotras*[1] did worship the Moon

[1] Bhargava's *Standard Illustrated Dictionary of the Hindi Language* (Benares, Bhargava Book Depot, 1946) ambiguously translates this Hindi word as 'race, caste, family, clan, lineage, blood, assembly, relation, multitude, family name;' of these words, clan seems to be to me the choicest word to convey what my respondents mean by *gotra*.

Goddess. The Gond shrines in her honour stubbornly resisted most attacks of the urban process, and persits in present unrelated context. How the Moon Goddess came to be in this temple could be accounted for by patterns observable today and by assuming the same processes operated then. To wit: The Moon Goddess shrine had been in the Gond village as a fragile structive of clay and assorted stones; the Gond raja or nobleman complimented the village by offering to house the divinity in a permanent structure, and his offer was accepted. Or, the Gond raja built the permanent structure but the Gond peasantry would not enter it unless a divinity known to them were installed, which was done as a concession to plebian prejudices. A Moon Goddess is also to be found in Religion A, and she became an ideological bridge between the warrior noblemen and the conquered peasants. I claim this surmise is not speculation because we see the same procedures and ideological bridges operating today in the city, and between the lower and higher classes. In the absence of written records and eye-witnesses the only procedure is to discover general and underlying patterns in the culture which are of sufficient prevalence and magnitude to justify the assumption that they operated within the same culture in the past.

We have now arrived at the point of recognizing Sacred Location One on the bank of a lakelet, far (in terms of walking) from the capital of the Gonds, in an outlying village, but within the ideological atmosphere of the two ruling concepts: 1. preservation of water bodies: 2. encouragement to institutions of Religion A on the banks of those same bodies of water.

Importance of Tracing the City's Development

About the year 1800 a decisive shift in land use occurred. The Marathas subdued the Moghul power and extended their sway into Mid-India from Nagpur. Military technology had been transformed by mobile artillery and musketry, rendering the mountain fortress impotent. The Maratta rulers over the area under discussion eliminated the igneous outcropping and its fort from strategic considerations, although allowing the nominal ruler, the Gond figurehead, to live there. They moved their organization the aforesaid five miles east and somewhat north, erecting a new town surrounded by a wall. Outside the wall their swiftly moving military units could manoeuver. This new town transformed the countryside and urbanism invaded the eastern wilderness, although Sacred Location One remained outside the town walls, by about one mile. This situation persisted until 1817 when the British broke the Maratta power and took over the entire area.

The British cared nothing for town walls and the same were torn down, only two gates remaining today as landmarks. The law, order, peace and commercialism brought by the British gave powerful incentives to business. The Maratta town soon expanded beyond the lines left by the previous walls, and Sacred Location One was in the path of the dynamic thrust of commerce. The tangential projection

of trade stopped approximately five hundred yards west of the sanctuary being discussed, for the simple reason that the lakelet blocked its further extension. The commercial projection thereupon turned eastward and skirted the northern shore of the water body, but did not veer the eastern shore toward Sacred Location One. Instead, the old village huts melted down as mud huts have a way of doing during the monsoon, if neglected. The old village disappeared into the soil, and stately brick mansions arose to the east of Sacred Location One. An upper class residential section basked momentarily on the east shore of the lakelet, and the British Residency stood serene and aloof three quarters of a mile further east.

About 1880 the situation for Sacred Location One enviable: A beautiful lakelet invited sacred bathing on its eastern ghats, and the quality of persons frequenting its shores was high. After their morning ablutions they paused to ring the bell to the Moon Goddess and to offer from their substantial means such gifts as delight a priest.

Importance of Perceiving Land Use Changes

Then the blow fell: the British decided to drain the lakelet! The Western rulers did not require water reservoirs on the edge of the town, prefering to construct an enormous storage vat fifteen miles to the east; Birmingham's foundaries were turning out enough pumps to find water beneath the ground. Aesthetic considerations did not figure in their decision, because they had changed the Gond kings' mango orchards into a spacious cantonment to the south and east. As for Religion A, the British were strictly neutral. Their motives were in accord with their own culture. That is, they proposed to build a public hospital for the care of the town's needy masses, and a town hall for their governance.

The result was catastrophic to the prospects of Sacred Location One. During the few years the lake bottom was drying out, a swarm of low class agricultural workers squatted in the locale. To meet their sustenance needs, small shops sprang up on the nether side of the new road built around the old lakelet bottom. The well-to-do residents sold their properties in order to move close to the new cantonment area. An institution of Religion B sprang up four hundred feet south of Sacred Location One, anticipating an affluent clientele from the clerical corps of the proposed town hall. After the old embankments had been pulled down and scraped into the lake bed to level it, the construction of the hospital and government offices commenced, driving out the agriculturists. The area became the habitat of temporary workmen. Sacred Location One, shorn of its old adherents, suffered a number of years under low class migrant pouplations to the west, and under the break-up of imposing residences on the east into small commercial frontages. On the south was Religion B, and to the north was the edge of the solid business development expanding beyond the Maratta city walls. Sacred Locaton One was marooned.

In the Occident, Sacred Location One would have gone out of existence, but not in the East. The masses do not permit any sanctuary to be torn down to make room for a different type of institution. The law protects their wishes. So Sacred Location One remained (withuot any functonary) to serve the religious needs of the gardeners and menial staff of the two new institutions. They comprised a few score illiterates without influence. Their Moon Goddess represent (to them) a havenly body of considerable tropical significance in calculating seasons for planting flowers.

Importance of Discovering Institutional Experiences

Like other low classes in other cultures, these illiterates preferred emotion to intellect, fervid song to abstruse doctrines. Let one of the gardeners tell what happened:

One night we gardeners and servants held an all night singing party. We hired some musicians to accompany us, and poets to recite. We had harmonium, cymbals and drums. The next morning these doctors, whose quarters were beside our sanctuary, filed an objection in writing with the hospital authority. They said that our type of worship causes disturbance, not only to doctors wishing to sleep, but to patients in the wards.

The hospital authority issued an order forbidding such services to continue, and we were either to obey or lose our jobs. Moreover, the hospital manager caused a policeman to stand in front of the sanctuary to discourage anybody entering. That constable kept coming daily for about three months, and frightened us poor gardeners. Our powerful people had moved away, so what could we do? Our sanctuary was suppressed. These 'medical people' don't believe in the power of the Moon Goddess, but talk about the power of medical-science. That's why these doctors don't worship gods and goddesses. Only one doctor worshipped when he was here, but now not one of them is rendering obeisance to gods. They are being punished for their unbelief. There is no blessing on their work and the wards are mostly empty. Very few patients are coming for treatment; only four or five indoor-patients are in the wards.

As we people are not allowed to worship here in the compound, so the shrines around the old lake bed are being deserted day by day.

One morning several weeks after the constable stopped coming, a cautious devotee peered into the old sanctuary for a precious glimpse of the Moon Goddess. She was gone! Her image had been taken away.

We gardeners do not know who removed the idol and the utensils and other things needed for worship. Some people say the hospital authorities, the upper class people of our own religion, did it in order to stop the noise of our songs for good and all. Others say that some of these Religion B people stole the image. Others say that the Moon Goddess was taken away to a sancutary where she could be worshipped without impediment by our own people. Anyhow, she was gone; how can you worship a goddess who is not here?

Thus, Religion A in Sacred Location One came to a complete stop. The sacristy lay empty and unused for some five years. The incoming shopkeepers and labouring classes were adherents of Religion A, but attached to other gods than the moon divinity whose primary appeal had been to the vanished Gonds.

Importance of Recognizing the Influence of a Leader

Religion C was represented thirty years ago by an enterprising religious celibate with an attractive personality. His followers respect and love him. Adherents to religions A and B admire him. They also fear him, for he represents a growing community of vigorous men whose economic strength is steadily increasing. The celibate says: 'I came here thirty years ago and found this sanctuary unused and dead. I asked myself, Why cannot my people use this deserted place for our religion?' Let another religion A gardener continue the story:

> This Baba (the celibate) came to us gardeners and servants working in the hospital and the town hall, and said: 'Look here! Your sanctuary is closed and falling into ruin. I am going to organize this holy place again, if you all will give me approval. So we signed or put our thumb prints on his paper, thinking that the Religion C people are powerful around here, and they will help us to get our religious building back again, and our goddess will be with us. He did not say this to us, but this was our hope.
>
> After getting our marks and signs on the paper, he collected some money, about Rs 600 from the Religion C people, and talked to the doctors privately. Then with that money he refurnished the deserted building and changed it inside. He also built a cottage for himself at the back. Then he put his religious things inside. The hospital authority kept quiet, and the doctors did not dare to object because these C people are powerful and not to be offended.
>
> As a matter of fact, the C people welcome us gardeners to their very good song services which bring joy to our hearts. But they don't sing all night as we used to do. The refugees have come since 1947 and increased the C community so that now sometimes 200 people worship their god here. These refugees say they are both Religion A and Religion C people, that they take some of both, and believe in the A gods and in the C gods. They are happy to be under this Baba, and we are getting used to the idea now.

The celibate explained the ceremony for accepting a convert to his faith. In order to preserve anonymity I shall not describe it fully. Here let me indicate only that in this traditional ritual a Moon Goddess figures prominently. Thus, the convert from Religion A comes to feel that the previous goddess in this sanctuary is accompanying him into Religion C.

To convert the building itself to the new faith, a *sthapit* (establishing) ceremony was held. In the words of the Baba:

> When this sanctuary was turned into a holy place of our religion, I used the modern ritual. I took the seat of 'guru' or teacher, and placed the new brick in the center of this room. Then all the people shouted our slogan. I put our holy book on the brick, and all the people exclaimed, 'Victory to our Holy Scriptures'. Next I distributed sweets to everybody. A song service followed. There is no rule about the time for singing but we respect the wishes of people.

Although the Religion C settlement in this area is growing, the great majority of residents are adherents to Religion A. They acquiesce in the institutional shift in religious affiliation as just described. There are two other dead and unused sanctuaries of Religion A in this same area, which are falling into ruin. 'A' people express regret at their

decay, but do nothing to rehabilitate them. No regret is mentioned in connection with the loss of Sacred Location One. After all, the sanctity of that spot has been preserved and honoured.

The Goal of this Study: Understanding

In summary, the sanctuary just described was the victim of political, land use and population changes extending over some three hundred years. These changes were accompanied by urbanism, that social invention of human agglomerations. Urbanism smashes the prevailing cultural pattern of the open countryside, and fragmentizes an area. The final denouement for Religion A in Sacred Location One was brought about by a class conflict and by ideological disagreement within Religion A itself, and these in turn are traceable to urbanism. The sacred location was abandoned by the parent faith. The second and succeeding religion was that of C, and its functionaries and followers appear to have proceeded honorably in their acquisition of the derelict property. The solution seems to be a relief to everybody in the area, for none like to see an abandoned sanctuary. The transfer presents no problem, and the relations between the two religons are cordial, especially since the C people welcome the A people.

As pointed out in previous instalments of The Mid-India Region, there is far more inter-religious fraternization and good will here than may be reported.

(To be continued)

EXAMPLE OF A HINDU PRAYER

He is ever hard to find, but He lives in the thought of the good;
He is the innermost secret of Scripture, inscrutable, unknowable;
He is honey and milk and the shining light. He is the king of the Devas,
Immanent in Vishnu, in Brahma, in flame and in wind,
Yea in the mighty sounding sea and in the mountains,
He is the great One who chooses Perumpattapuliyur for His own.
If there be days when my tongue is dumb and speaks not of Him,
Let not such days be counted in the record of my life.

Thy throat the black sea's poison drank, as 'twere ambrosia sweet,
O dear-skin wearer, Uma's lord, king of the gods on High;
Kailasa's hill is Thine abode, and when the lovers cry
'Forgive our sin', great One, forgiveness is thy duty meet;
For with Thee is great grace, lord of celestial beings all,
Who dwell'st in Avaduturai, where peacocks dance and call.

Selected from DEVARAM

(A New Translation)

CHAPTER XXVI

Refusing to eat meat

Stanza 1

How can a man be gracious if he eats the flesh of some other animal in order to sustain his own flesh.

Stanza 2

He who guards not property loses it. He who eats flesh loses grace.

Stanza 3

The soldier in the field has no choice except to kill. So is the man who has tasted flesh.

Stanza 4

What is graciousness except not killing Likewise what is ungraciousness except killing.

Stanza 5

Animals thrive where flesh is not eaten, and hell does not give up easily flesh eaters.

Stanza 6

If there are no flesh eaters there will not be any meat stall.

Stanza 7

If one realises that flesh is the sore of an animal, he will not partake of it.

Stanza 8

Those who distinguish good from the bad will not eat (the bad) flesh separated from body.

N.B. The underlying idea is flesh is always evil.

Stanza 9

Better is vegetarian life than a thousand costly sacrifices.

Stanza 10

All beings worship with folded hands him who neither kills nor eats flesh.

CHAPTER XXVII

Asceticism

Stanza 1

True asceticism is bearing pain ones' self and not giving pain to others.

Stanza 2

Asceticism is possible only to those who have acquired merits in the past birth. It is vain for others to attempt it.

Stanza 3

The house-holder has lost the gains of asceticism just in order that the ascetics might be fed (and helped in other ways).

Stanza 4

The ascetics by their very thoughts can destroy those who hate them and bless those who love them.

Stanza 5

Asceticism must be practised in this life so that in the next life the desired benefits might be obtained.

Stanza 6

Those who practise asceticism help themselves. Others do not, because they get involved in desires.

Stanza 7

Just as gold shines brightly when put in fire, even so the ascetics when they are put in affliction.

Stanza 8

The ascetic who has realized his life will be worshipped by those who have not realized theirs.

Stanza 9

The successful ascetic can control even death.

Stanza 10

In this world some are poor and others rich, this differences is because in the previous births some have done meritorious deeds while others have not.

Chapter XXVIII

Improper Conduct

(**N.B.** The poet has in mind specially the ascetics who have renounced the pleasures of the world.)

Stanza 1

The five elements themselves will laugh at the conduct of the deceitful man.

(**Note:** The five elements are earth, water, fire, air, and ether).

Stanza 2

What is the use of a man's sky-soaring fame of saintliness if his heart accuses him of willful misconduct.

Stanza 3

He who wears the garb of an ascetic and has not the ability to control his senses is like a cow that puts on the skin of a tiger and grazes.

Stanza 4

Evil deeds under the cloak of asceticism is like a hunter lying in ambush to kill animals.

Stanza 5

He who for the sake of fame says 'I have renounced the world' will feel sorry and say 'why did I ever do this?'

Stanza 6

There is no greater sinner than the deciever who without renouncing any evil in his heart, appears as an ascetic.

Stanza 7

The (sincere) ascetics are like the (beautiful) red kunri seeds. As the top of this seed is pitch-black, so are the false ascetics in this world.

Stanza 8

Many are there in this world who live a life of hypocrisy and hide sin in their heart but go and bathe in sacred rivers.

Note: Commentators say that 'Sin' referred here is threefold viz., anger, desire and ignorance.

Stanza 9

The arrow (though straight) brings about death. The Yal though crooked, produces sweet music. Hence men should be judged by what they do (not by appearance).

Note: Yal is a stringed instrument shaped like a violin.

Stanza 10

It is not necessary for an ascetic to take off his hair or grow pleats, if he gives up all that is counted evil.

Chapter XXIX

Note Desiring to Grab

(The emphasis is on the inward desire of the ascetic rather than on any overt act.)

Stanza 1

He who desires release (Moksha) should relinquish in his heart any desire to grab another's possesions.

Stanza 2

Even the idea of grabbing another's possession is evil.

Stanza 3

The wealth of him who grabs will perish beyond reckoning.

Stanza 4

The desire to grab might taste sweet, but it ends in irretrievable destruction.

Stanza 5

He who is waiting for an opportunity to steal another man's property does not know grace, nor has he love for it.

Stanza 6

Those that covet other's possessions cannot walk in the way of righteousness.

Stanza 7

The darkness of covetousness is not found in those that have the light of discernment.

Stanza 8

As righteousness fills the hearts of those who discern, so the hearts of the covetous are filled with iniquity.

Stanza 9

Those that do not discern will commit (sins) without reckoning and perish.

Stanza 10

The covetous are set aside even by their bodies but those that do not covet are not set aside even by the dwellers in heaven.

Chapter XXX

Truthfulness

Stanza 1

Words that do not harm others are true.

N.B. According to the poet the criterion of truth is not metaphysical —not conformity of ideas to reality nor coherence of thought—but it is moral and pragmatic.

Stanza 2

Even a lie is true if it produces only good.

Stanza 3

Let no one tell a thing which in his heart he knows to be false. If he does, his very heart will scold him.

Stanza 4

He who lies not in his heart is in the heart of the whole world.

Stanza 5

He who speaks truth from his heart is greater than a liberal donor and an ascetic.

Stanza 6

There is no greater praise than truthfulness. Not inflicting harm is the basis of all virtues.

Stanza 7

If one is able to speak the truth always, let him do it. He need not strive after other virtues.

Stanza 8

Water cleans only outwardly (the body) while truthfulness cleans inwardly (the heart).

Stanza 9

To the wise, all lamps that dispel darkness are not lamps; the true lamp is that one which never lies (i.e., that dispels moral darkness).

Stanza 10

In all our experience there is nothing (greater) than truth.

AN EXAMPLE OF ICONOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

The Problem and the Method

Given a group of deserted temples, disused and falling into ruin, and given a group of people living in the area who are not descendents of the original worshippers in the temples, from what source can information be gathered relating to the temples? Can the dumb stones speak when man's memory or knowledge is unavailable? This was the question we of the Department of Organized Research of Leonard Theological College asked ourselves as we began a study of the iconography, history, and architecture of a group of twenty-five temples and related buildings found in a deserted condition on the outskirts of Jabalpur.

An icon is an object which is worshipped. Iconography is the study of the images or symbols which are themselves worshipped and of related images or symbols appearing as decorative or architectural features. Could this study answer the many questions which we asked ourselves about this temple? 'To which sect did the worshippers belong?'; 'Why are they now deserted?'; 'Is there order and purpose in the manner in which the images are carved and placed?'; 'What can we learn of the rituals connected with the worship?'. All this and much more we wanted to discover.

Our method was first to record all pertinent information; a detailed description of the features, condition, and position of each image, a record and description of all iconographical details, and a sketch and description of all significant architectural features. Later, this information was organized, systematized, and conclusions were drawn. Some of our questions were answered. To some questions we can give only suggested or limited answers, since for adequate and balanced answers a study of temples of the whole area must be undertaken.

More interesting than the questions we did answer are the new questions we are now led to ask. The most concrete result of our study, however, was to prove to us that we could find valuable and valid information relying entirely on iconographical and architectural methods of research.

Description of the Site

The temples in question number twenty-five. They are set in three main clusters and several groups of two or three, with a number of other temples near-by but isolated. They all consist either of a mandapa (porch) and a garbha-griha (cella), or of a garbha griha only. Fourteen of the temples contain a group of images carved in relief on stone slabs about a yard square. Also in relation to the temples are two other kinds of structures used in worship: the chattir mandir, a platform with a column at each corner and a roof overhead, and a simple platform raised several feet above the ground. In the center of each kind of structure is an icon. In the area of the temples are also found stone containers called Tulsie-kunds, in which were planted sacred Tulsie plants. The fact that the area was once the center of an organized community of people is shown by portions of walls, gateways, platforms, floors, living quarters, which have fallen into ruin and are today covered with undergrowth.

Results of the Study

The most interesting results of this study lay in the field of iconography. Though other information of interest was gathered, much of it will have to be related to a wider study of the architecture and history of the area. In iconography, however, the results are complete in themselves, and answer for us questions relating to the nature of the religious community which once inhabited this now deserted area. Herein, therefore, will be set forth the results of this study.

Related Iconographical Features

Various images were found to be used in a semi-decorative manner in the same position at each temple. These images are symbolic and factional, often related to some story or legend, but not in themselves objects of worship. Recognition of the significance of these images helped to establish the nature of the deity worshipped in the temples. The most important of these images are:

The *Kirttimukha*, a face carved into the stone of the doorstep. This is related to Shivaite worship, and was originally conceived as a grotesque mask, later became a popular feature of decoration in South India, and in our temples appears as a faun-like face with either little horns on the forehead or curls in the manner of horns. The face usually has a mustache and pointed beard, and the features and facial characteristics vary greatly. The legend relating to the mask deals with an attempt of Siva to protect his sanctuary by assuming a horrible aspect, and is today used in the sense of protection of the sanctuary also.

The figure of *Ganesha* is found carved into the door linted at almost every temple. Where it is not on the lintel itself, it is set into the temple wall just above the door. In a few cases, Ganesh appears both on the lintel and above as well. Unlike other related iconographical features the figure of Ganesha is actually worshipped.

Guardian Figures (Dvarapalas) are found carved into the door-jambs at some temples. The guardians are very small, not measuring over a foot or so in height. The two figures are always similar but never identical. They hold various weapons in their hands, and vary greatly in clothing and facial features.

Four Heads attached to and integral with a stone disk, are found just below the finial spire on several of the temples. They face directly towards the four directions and are probably the Guardians of the Four Quarters, though we are not familiar with the use of this particular iconography at any other temples. The faces on any one temple are similar, but from temple to temple the features and headgear vary considerably. Such heads appear only on temples with sikharas (pointed spires) and never on temples with domes.

Bull-head Water Spouts are found at several temples. All temples of the group have some kind of water spout or drain from the interior to the outside plinth wall, but only a few have carved spouts. These drains are used in worship of the Lingam found in each temple.

The evidence of the related iconography, then, points to Shivaite occupation of these temples. In particular, the Kirttimukha, Ganesha, and bull-head water spouts (which are Nandi, the animal associated with Siva) confirm this conclusion.

The Icons or Image Slabs

In the fourteen temples where image slabs appear, they are placed upon ledges which have been built out from the wall. The slabs themselves are not attached to the wall, but the ledges are. In a few cases only the ledge remains, while the image is missing, but we feel justified in assuming that the proper image once occupied the place. The artistic style of all the icons in any one temple is the same, but from temple to temple there is great variety both in style and in technical skill. The following is a list of all deities represented in the whole group of twenty-five temples.

Radha-Krishna	2	Vishnu-Lakshmi	14
Hanuman	5	Surya	14
Footprints	1	Ganesha	14
Temple	1	Narbadda (Local river goddess)	7
Siva-Paravati	1	Saraswati	9
Devi (Kali)	1		

Five of these; Vishnu-Lakshmi, Surya, Ganesha, Narbadda, and Saraswati, appear in regular order in thirteen temples of the area, and in no other temples at all except one where these same images are found

but scattered about in various places, out of order, since the temple garbha-griha had been taken for use by another sect.

Hanuman, Radha-Krishna, and probably the footprints, appear as recent additions and are in present use by the people of the areas while the other images are not worshipped by them. The two images of Radha-Krishna are figures in the round, dressed in actual clothing, in the modern manner. The figures of Hanuman are entirely similar to modern representations of this deity. The shrines where they are placed show evidence of former occupation by the original worshippers. Therefore, we will not consider these figures in our iconographical study.

The five related figures appear in four different, but regular arrangements around the walls of the garbha-griha. In some cases one image may not appear, but the place where it belongs is left vacant, never filled by a different image. Further analysis reveals that, while there are four different arrangements of images within a temple, nevertheless, the chronological arrangement is the same for all arrangements: Vishnu-Lakshmi is followed by Narbadda, which is followed by Saraswati, followed by Ganesha, followed by Surya, making the circle complete to Vishnu-Lakshmi again. The difference in arrangements is related only to which image begins the circle, to the right of the door, going clockwise. The only image not used to begin a series is Surya.

The orientation of each image (the direction it faces) is also regular, and the same for all arrangements. Vishnu-Lakshmi faces West, Narbadda faces South, Saraswati East, Genesha North and Surya North. We noted, however, that in one arrangement, Narbadda faces East. In this arrangement only, Saraswati does not appear, and Narbadda seems to take her place. The reason for this switch will be dealt with later in this study.

From the foregoing, then, it is clear that the orientation of each image determines its position both on the wall and in the series. Since both Ganesha and Surya are both North oriented, but also remain in the same place in the series, it is clear that both factors are important.

Orientation of Temples

The direction in which the temples face, that is the wall in which the door is found, gives additional help in understanding the situation. Of the twenty-five temples under study, eight face North, three face South, eleven face East, and three face West. There does not appear to be any uniformity in orientation, then, though among these temples, North and East seem more popular.

However, when we consider the orientation of the temples with icon slabs we find that all the temples with icon arrangement I face East; all those with icon arrangement II face West; and all those with icon arrangement III and IV face North. The icon arrangements of III and IV are identical except for the absence of Saraswati in III and of Narbadda in IV, so it is not surprising that the two arrangements have the same orientation.

It is clear then, that while the orientation of the temple itself may have no particular significance, the arrangement of the images within the temple depends entirely upon the temple orientation, since each image must maintain its own orientation. This is further proved by the fact that all temples of arrangement I have Eastern orientation, while no others of a different arrangement have Eastern orientation. The same is true of the other three arrangements.

The Central Icon

The aniconic (non-human) image of Siva, the *Lingam*, in combination with the Sakti image, the *Yoni*, is found in the center of each of the twenty five temple shirnes. (Expect for the two where Radha-Krishna have replaced the original deities. Since these two shrines still contain drain outlets such as are used in the worship of the Lingam-Yoni, it may be assumed that they also once contained such images.) Facing the Lingam-Yoni is the kneeling figure of Nandi the bull, vahan (vehicle or special animal) of Siva. To one side is set a head with a long neck. This head is variously called Kartik, Kirttimukha, and Deo Mukha. The meaning of this head is not clear to us at present. It might be related to the son of Shiva, Karttikeya, or to the mask Kirtimukha. In the later case, however, legend would link it to the role of a protector, whereas this position seems to indicate a worshipper.

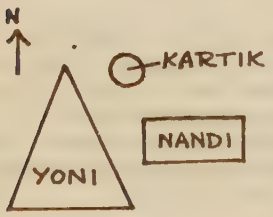
Since the Yoni is round with an elongated drain on one side, this point will be used to determine orientation. The yoni pionts to the right of the door in some temples, to the left in others, and to the rear in a few. When, we consider the directional orientation, however, we find that in fifteen temples it points North and in ten it points West. Never does it point South or East.

In no case has the yoni been found to point to the rear wall in a temple where image slabs are used. Though the yoni points to the right of the door in arrangement I and to the left in arrangement II, this makes the yoni point North in both cases. In arrangements III and IV, already noted to have the same orientation, the yoni points to the left of the door.

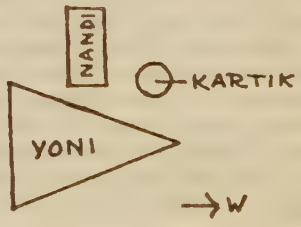
Relation of the Lingam-yoni to Nandi and Kartik

We found the relation of these three images to each other to be of two major types, directly relating to the two possible orientations of the yoni.

NORTH TYPE



WEST TYPE



Nandi is generally seated with his back to the door, but this changes in three temples where the orientation demands it. Where image slabs are found, Kartik is in the same corner as Vishnu-Lakshmi, facing Ganesha in the opposite corner. There is a North type variation which was made necessary by the fact that Kartik must face Ganesh, found in three temples, so it is clear that the relation of Kartik to the images is as to the lingam-yoni.

LOCAL TRADITION Vs. ICONOGRAPHY

Present residents of this area say that one group of temples with living quarters was originally a Vaisnavite monastery while another group of temples with living quarters was a Shivaite monastery. They do not account for the other temples in the area. Iconographical evidence conflicts with this assertion, and makes the following conclusions possible:

All the temples are related and were used by the same sect. The related iconographical features, the image slabs, the central icon are the same in all temples. In addition, the pattern of orientation of temples, image slabs, central icon, is the same for all temples. A study of the architecture of all the temples (report not included here) shows undeniable relationships.

All temples are Shivaite, though as will be shown later, probably of a very special type. This is shown by the related iconographical features already mentioned as exclusively Shivaite and by the fact that the central icon in every temple is the Lingam-yoni. These features were carefully checked and proved to be integral with the stone-work of the temples themselves. There is no possibility that they are features added later by a different group from the original worshippers. In the same way, drains from the center of the shrine to the outside plinth wall were found in every case, related to the Lingam-yoni.

In addition, three temples contain written inscriptions pertaining to the date of construction of the temple, the donor, and the deity in whose honour the temple was constructed. One such inscription was found in the group of temples described by local tradition as Vaisnavite. The installation of the image of Siva was recorded, with a mention of Ganesha as well. The installation of similar image in the group of temples described by local tradition as Shivaite is recorded at one of those temples. A third inscription at a more isolated temple mentions Durga as well as describes the installation of a Siva image.

Image slabs of various sects

Though the essential nature of the temples is established as Shivaite, there remains the problem of the image slabs which represent deities of various sects. This particular group of images is not found in connection with each other in any other temples in the Jabalpur area.

Since ancient times a Brahman group known as the Smārtas, a syncretistic sect, have given reverence to the principal deities of the

five approved Brahmanical Hindu cults, in a worship described as 'pancayatana puja'. These approved cults are those of Vishnu, Siva, Ganesha, Devi, and Surya. Though syncretistic, the principal deity of the worshipper would occupy the center position while the other four would occupy niches on the sides of the garbhagriha. There were other groups, influenced by this thinking, who did not use precisely these deities, but who also mixed deities of various sects.

Our shrines contain Vishnu, Siva, Ganesha, and Surya, the principle position in the center of the shrine being occupied by the Siva image. To this extent it corresponds to the above description. The only problem is Devi.

The problem of Devi

Saraswati is sometimes considered as Sakti in its absolute sense. The general name given to the goddess related to Sakti is Devi. Thus Saraswati may at times represent Devi. She is also goddess of the mythical river Saraswati, making her a river goddess.

The river goddess Ganga is a consort of Siva. The consorts of Siva are all related to Sakti and fall under the general term Devi. Narbadda is found to have identical iconographical characteristics with Ganga. Not all river goddesses are considered consorts of Siva, however. The iconographicl characteristics of the river goddess Yumna, for instance, do not appear in relation to Narbadda; only those of Ganga who is a consort of Siva. So she may well be a local form of Ganga, or related to her. This is a question which would require extensive research to obtain a satisfactory answer.

It is here offered as a suggestion. If Narbadda is a form of Ganga, then she is also Devi.

Thus, either Saraswati or Narbadda could represent Devi in this group, completing the five deities of the five sects worshipped by the Smārtas. This would also explain why in most temples either Saraswati or Narbadda appear, but not both. In only four temples do they appear together. To strengthen this idea, in the last two temples found, Saraswati was found riding a tiger, vehicle of Devi, in one. In the other, in place of Saraswati, with the same orientation, was found an image slab representing Devi herself, complete with a trisul, sword, and severed human head, all distinct characteristics of Devi in her fearful aspect.

Saraswati and Narbadda are not to be considered identical, however, since they each have a distinct orientation. But this relationship might explain the irregularity of Narbadda appearing with the orientation of Saraswati in two temples.

Conclusions

Generally speaking, then, our Iconographical study of these twenty-five deserted temples has shown us that there is order and purpose in the manner in which images are carved and placed, and that this order

is elaborate and strict. It has told us to which sect the worshippers belonged, and posed a probable answer for the many unusual features found, in extending our understanding of the sect to that of a very specialized sub-group within the general classification.

With this conclusion, we may suggest a reason for the present deserted condition of these temples. According to local tradition there were monasteries on this site. This is probably true. The type of living quarters found suggest a communal form of life. These were probably the temples and quarters of a monastic community of a syncretistic sect, the Smārtas. That they were under the patronage of the local ruler when they were built is shown by the inscriptions. Within two decades of the building of the inscribed temples the local dynasty had been overthrown and another ruling group had taken its place. With this change, patronage of the monastery group was probably withdrawn. Such a group could not continue without support, and may have been originally strange and unacceptable to the local people. When the monastic community dissolved the buildings were unused. Considerably later, local people who were new-comers to the area set up their own deities in a few of the temples, and cared for these. The rest have falled into complete disrepair.

Value of Iconography

These then are conclusions made possible solely through application of principles of research in the field of Iconography. Even where verbal and historical traditions are available, such a study would have additional information to give. The main conclusion of our study, then, is that Iconography is a useful and valid method of research in the field of Indian religion and culture.

Naomi Wray

The Doctrine of Karma and Transmigration

If there is any one doctrine which is held throughout India, it is the doctrine of Karma and transmigration. Not only the six orthodox systems hold to this doctrine but also the heretic Buddhists and Jains subscribe to it.

To the Hindu, the Jain or the Buddhist is a heretic because he does not take the Hindu Vedas as absolutely authoritative.

So when the Gita makes use of the Karma concept it is dealing with an idea which was thought of as axiomatic by most of the people of its days.

The concept defined

Deussen says, 'The idea is this that life in quality as well as in quantity is the accurately meted and altogether fitting expiation of the deeds of previous existence. This expiation takes place through *bhoktritvam* (enjoying and acting) where the latter is again inevitably converted into deeds which might be expiated anew in a subsequent existence, so that the clock work of requital in running down always winds itself up again, and so on in perpetuity, unless there comes upon the scene the universal knowledge which as will be seen, does not rest upon merit but breaks its way into existence without connexion therewith, to dissolve it utterly, to burn up the seed of deeds and thus to render a continuance of the transmigration impossible for ever after. However, knowledge cannot arrest the present existence, because the latter is conditioned by the deeds in an earlier birth'.

The following quotations from Gita make it clear:

1. The fact of rebirth

'As a man puts off worn-out raiment and takes other new, so does the embodied soul put off his worn out bodies and enter other new'. 2:22. For of the born the death is sure and sure the birth of the dead, therefore what none can prevent thou shouldst not grieve. 2:27.

Even Krishna is not free from births and deaths. In 4:5 he says:

'Many births of me are passed, and of thee, O Arjuna. I known them all and thou knowest them, not, Paramtapa.

The above passages bring out clearly three important facts regarding the doctrine of Karma.

(*a*) No man can escape his Karma. It is a very realistic picture of the universe that it is moral and that there is an absolute necessity of an expiation of evil. As Dr Hogg[1] points out, Moderns may speak slightingly of sin as mere imperfection, and as will be evident there is

[1] A. G. Hogg: *Karma and Redemption* (Madras; C.L.S.) p. 14.

in the idea of Karma a certain basis for this view, but there is ground for a deeper view also. A man's imperfection is declared to have for him an issue that is momentous, it plunges him remorselessly in the weary samsara'.[1]

(*b*) The doctrine of Karma shows that a good deed cannot expiate an evil deed. To put it bluntly a man who plunders one day in the month cannot say that he did not plunder twenty nine days in the month and so he is not culpable. The law of Karma would say every deed has its consequences. Every evil deed is punished and every good deed is rewarded.

(*c*) This doctrine also affirms that the punishment is individual. 'Among a thousand cows the calf knows its mother' says the old writer. Similarly the individual man's sin will find him out wherever he may hide. The Gita agrees with all the other Hindu writings in emphasising these points. The following are important points in connection with the doctrine of Karma and Transmigration.

2. Cause of rebirth

Attachment to the three gunas is said to be the cause of transmigration. In fact attachment is the source of all Karma. Thus it is stated:

> 'In the production of effects and causes, Nature is said to be the cause; in the experiencing of pleasure and pain the Person is said to be the cause.
>
> For the person, abiding in Nature, experiences the strands born of nature; his attachment to the strands is the cause of his birth in good or evil wombs'. 13:20, 21.

In an obscure passage the time a man dies is said to affect his rebirth.

> 'Now at what time departing Ascetics go hence, not to return or to return, that time I will declare to thee, O prince of Bharata.
>
> Fire, light, day, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern course, men who depart in these, knowers of Brahman to Brahman go. Smoke and night, the dark fortnight, the six months of the southern course—in these the Ascetic attains to the light of the moon, and returns 8:23-25.

This passage is derived from certain sections of Brhadaranyaka, Chandogya and Kausitaki Upanishads. In commenting on this passage Hill says, 'the opinions of commentators differ widely with regard to the value and meanings of this obscure passage. Davis for example, considers it to be so unworthy of the author of the Gita that he encloses it within brackets; Thomson on the other hand, holds that 'our poet has borrowed a popular superstition merely as an apt and elegant poetical

[1] A. G. Hogg, *Karma and Redemption* (p. 16).

metaphor; Sankaracharya says that fire, light, smoke, etc., are either the deities so called or the deities presiding over time; Ramanujacharya explains that time in 23 means the path where the deities who preside over the divisions of time dwell in great numbers'. However, the current idea was clear when a man dies if he has accumulated some merits but has not acquired release, his soul enters the *bhuvarloka.* If his descendants make funeral ceremonies for him he is clothed with a body and goes to the world of the 'fathers' *Pitriuloka.* He will stay here till his merits are exhausted and then he will come back to earth to be born in accordance with the nature of his previous life. The following verses make it clear.

'He that has fallen from control attains the worlds of those that do deeds of merit, and after dwelling there for endless years is born again in the house of the pure and the wealthy. Or even in a family of wise Ascetics is he born through such birth as this in the world is more difficult to win.

But he who strives with earnest striving, the Ascetic cleansed of stain he who through many births has won perfection, goes thence on the highest way' (6:41, 42, 45).

This makes it clear that doing good is of no use in obtaining release from births and deaths. Some people are hopelessly incurable. They will keep on dying and being born again and again. That is because of the very nature of their lives. Thus:

'These cruel haters, lowest of mankind and vile, I *hurl* for ever in births cycles into Devilish wombs.

They enter a Devilish womb in birth after birth deluded; to me they never win, O son of Kunti, but go thence to the lowest way' 16:19, 20.

In commenting on this Hill quotes from Anandgiri 'When once such men have been reborn in "asura wombs" their case is hopeless, but man is a free agent, while still a man should try to shake off the asura nature' (Hill, The Bhagavadgita, p. 194). However, the hopelessness is not connected with the accident of birth in a particular environment. It is connected with the very nature of the strands or Gunas that constitute the being of life itself.

'If, when Purity has increased, the body-bearing soul comes to dissolution then he proceeds to the spotless worlds of the most wise.

If, when Energy, has increased, he goes to dissolution, he is born among men attached to work, and if dissolved when Darkness has increased, he is born in the wombs of the witless; of work well done, they say, the fruit is pure and stainless; of Energy, the fruit is pain, the fruit of Darkness, ignorance (14:14-16).

[1] Hill, *The Bhagavad Gita,* p. 137.

In an atheistic system like Sankya, Karma and Transmigration are the greatest bug-bears of mankind because the only way to get release is by knowledge which is impossible for a large section of the people. However, in the Gita not only knowledge, but bhakti or devotion to Krishna bring about release. Knowledge in the Gita is knowledge of Krishna. The following verses are clear.

'He who thus knows in verity my birth and work divine, when he has left the body, goes not again to birth, he comes to me, O Arjuna' (4:9).

'When they have come to me, great souls win not rebirth, abode of pain passing away, to highest perfection have they gone.

The worlds, even to the realm of Brahma are subject to return, O Arjuna; but for him who comes to me, O son of Kunti, there is no rebirth' (8:15, 16).

(All quotations in this article are taken from W. D. P. Hill, *The Bhagavadgita;* (Oxford; University Press, 1953).

BOOK REVIEWS

By R. D. Immanuel

Purani, A. B.: *Life of Sri Aurobindo* (Pondicheri, Aurobindo Ashram) 1958, pp. 315.

It is very difficult for any one to write the biography of another person. Either he fails to do justice to his hero's greatness, or (as it is often the case) he is carried away by a spirit of unmixed admiration and fails to see the shortcomings and failures of the person whose life he is describing. As a historian he should be unprejudiced. But it is difficult to be level headed, when a person's life has so much influenced the life of the writer that he undertakes to write a biography.

A. B. Purani has attempted to be a true historian. He has taken great pains to be accurate and precise. He has gone through with untiring perseverance an enormous amount of records, literature and letters to find out the true facts concerning Sir Aurobindo Ghosh. But it must be stated that Purani is more a worshipper than a biographer of Ghosh. This is the strength as well as the weakness of this book. The following excerpt (taken at random out of many) shows the reader how much Purani loved and adored Ghosh.

The incident described here is Ghosh meeting his disciples after *Darshan.* 'Every one is happy—supremely happy—in perfect ecstasy. Today there is an empire of delight! Oh Artist! what a marvellous art! So much of delight for every one of them! Delights that fill and overflow.—For a short time about five minutes, there was complete silence! Then he glanced at each one separately. The minutes

were melting into the silence. There is again a wave of emotion in all, all bathe again into an ocean of some divine emotion. How wonderful if the whole Eternity would flow in this experience. Time, poor time and its flow is blamed by men. But where is the fault in the flow of time? If so much love and such Divine light can have its play let poor time flow and have its Eternity!'

What Ghosh was to Purani was much more than Johnson was to Boswell—because to Purani, Ghosh is nothing short of the 'Ascent from Mind to Supermind, from the human to the Divine'.

So his thesis is that the life of Ghosh was more than ordinary and as such is not explicable. Because of this standpoint he criticises mercilessly three good biographers of Ghosh who try to find out the movements and persons that have influenced Ghosh (pp. 298-312) Any one who reads some of the works of Ghosh can easily see how much he has been affected by his English education, the Bible, the Shakti movement of Bengal, the Gita, and the Upanishads. But Purani does not believe so.

However the book is worth reading. It tells us what the followers of Ghosh think about their master. That the author has sincerely tried to be historical there is no doubt, but it is impossible for intense love to detect flaws and blemishes in the life of the beloved.

The book has three parts. The first one deals with Ghosh's life before he came to settle at Pondicherry, the second his life at Pondicherry. The third part is a series of appendices. The print is clear and the volume is attractive. While there might be differences of opinion about interpretation of facts, his description of them are of great value to students of religion.

DUSSERAH IN SEVERAL PARTS OF INDIA

India is a land of distances, both in space and time. This is easily seen in the varied observance of the Dusserah festival. Some of these customs are exceedingly primitive while others are ultra modern. In South India Dusserah is connected with Vijaya Dashami. That is the tenth day of the rising moon in September—October, when the ancient rajas used to go out to conquer with their armies. In Modern days in South India it is more a woman's festival and has been called often Navaratri or nine nights. The festival is associated with the worship of Saraswati the goddess of knowledge and Kali the godess of destructive power. The former is said to be beautiful, gentle, smiling and she is represented in pictures as seated on a peacock with a veena (a stringed musical instrument). She is the goddess of creative art. On the other hand Kali has a terrible appearance. She is represented wearing round her neck a garland of skulls. She has a trident in one hand and in the other hand she has the head of a demon and under her feet are the corpses of the foes she has slain.

In South India it has been a chief characteristic that in Dusserah must be observed what is known as *golu.* Golu is an exhibition at home. A special room is set apart in the house in which a light burns continuously day and night for nine days. These lights are fed by ghee (melted butter) from cows milk. Ladies are very particular to see that they use only butter from cows milk (and not from buffalos milk). A platform is erected containing several steps and on these steps are put clay models, toys, curios etc., and these make a fine show. In one corner of the room they light *oothu bathis* (incense sticks) Sometimes on this tier they put their gold and silver ornaments too. Naturally such an exhibition would be of no value unless neighbours come and see. So the evenings are set apart for social visits. When a neighbour comes he or she should be entertained, with music and light refreshments. Since this is a ladies' festival the visitors are mainly ladies. But men are also welcome. Usually the visitor goes to the room where the exhibitions are kept. He makes obeisance to the idol and then begins to critically examine the things displayed. If the hostess or her daughter is a singer they are requested to sing. If not the visitors can sing for them. When they depart they are given a big coconut, a few beatel leaves and a few nuts (arecanut) along with sandal paste.

In the temples in South India they collect images and works of art. They used to have music and dancing as part of the celebrations. In recent years the dancing of women before this exhibition has been prohibited by the government. But the singing of women still continues.

Usually the lower castes sacrifice to the goddess Kali in Dusserah season. The victim chosen is a buffalo if the community is rich, otherwise only goats are offered. (The Kali temple always faces North.)

The animals neck is severed at one blow. In recent years on account of the doctrine of Ahimsa (non-violence) one often sees symbolic sacrifices. In such cases instead of a goat or buffalo, vegetables like cucumber or brinjal are sacrificed.

In Kerala, Saraswati is worshipped on the 9th day of Dusserah It is a complete holiday in which all arts and crafts must have rest. In schools the teachers get all the books from the pupils and they are neatly arranged on the table. Turmuric (yellow powder) is sprinkled and all the Hindu children are required to worship. The farmers collect their implements, carpenters their tools, fishermen their nets, the barbers their razors, the tailors their needles and scissors, and they, all, bow down and worship them. Housewives worship their cooking vessels, their grinding stones, and winnowing fans. Car drivers decorate their car with flowers and sandal paste. On top of the sandal paste they dust yellow powder. Then they break a coconut before the car and fall down before it and worship.

Perhaps the best place to go and see the celebration of this festival is Mysore. Here Dusserah assumes a national aspect. Mysore freed itself from the yoke of Vijayanagar in 1571 and since 1610 this custom of enjoying Dusserah with great pomp and pagentry has been in vogue. The Maharaja's palace at Mysore is richly decorated and it is thrown open to the public inspection at stated hours when the whole place is brightly illuminated with several attractive coloured bulbs. Behind this festival is the myth of the god Shiva with his consort destroying the forces of devils. On the morning of the first day the Maharaja worship Chamundi the *kula devata* (goddess of the royal family). He wears a special dress and puts on a bracelet which is sacred to the deity. This ornament is not removed until the festival is over and he is expected to be within the palace doing penance in order to gain merit and be a worthy servant of the goddess and a blessing to his people.

Dusserah in North India centres around the story of Ram defeating Ravan. This victory is observed at sun-set on the last day of Dusserah. It is more like the Guy Faukes Day in England because huge effigies of the ten-headed giant Ravan are made and burnt. People take delight in seeing the spectacle. They throw crackers and shout with joy as the effigy is burnt down. In almost every village it is a common scene in North India to see the dramas staged. The story is always the same scenes from Ramayana. These plays are called *Ramlila*. If there are not enough actors found the story is recited along with actions in a serial form each night. The man who recites has many jokes to crack, stories to illustrate and so keep his audience attentive all the time. This recitation continue for hours as late as 2 O'clock in the morning. In the cities, well-known ballet dancers dance through the whole story.

In Madya Pradesh it is believed that there was a demon called Maheshur and that Durga killed him, and the story is retold with great relish.

In Nepal a story very similar to the one just now mentioned is told but the goddess is known as Chandi and she is worshipped by the Royalties and the peasants. The first day she is invoked by the householder to come and rest for the duration of the festival into a pitcher of water. That pitcher is placed on a pile of earth in which wheat is sown. On a certain day Brahmins carrying leaves from the sacred plants of the royal palace go in a procession. The plants are brought each year from the place where the Gurkha race is said to have originated. A relay of Brahmans carries this to Kathmandu. The last day is the day of sacrifices. Goats and buffalos are killed by one clean stroke. At last Chandi is asked to protect all arms and regimented colours. Then she is bidden farewell to go to her place in heaven for another twelve months.

In Gujarat the festival is called Navaratri. Girls dressed gaily, go from house to house with an earthen pot on their head. There is a small light hidden in the vessel which burns and throws its light upward. They sing traditional songs. In some cases pumpkins are anointed with red powder and they are offered to the goddess to ensure prosperity.

In Bengal this is the most popular festival and is usually called Durga Puja. It is mainly observed by Shaktas or worhsippers of Shakti (the conception of the divine attribute of Power represented in female form as the living energy of nature—the mighty mother of the Universe). The details of the Durga Puja are governed by Tantric texts but the Puja is one of the purest forms of the worship of Shakti. The prayers and mantras are taken from Tantric texts but no one connects these festival days with a saturnalia of drunkenness or debauchery. It seems as if the festival is an agricultural one—because it comes after the harvest season in Bengal. As in the other parts of India the festival is associated with the victory of Ram over Ravan. Ramlila-performances are to be seen throughout Bengal. The last three days are very important. They are filled with elaborate ceremonies and with a continuous round of merry making, feasting and rejoicing. The religious duties are discharged by the community as a whole. Voluntry subscription from well to do people are used to defray the cost of elaborate decorations of the town and the deity. The image is placed on the center of a platform in which there are places left for smaller deities. Durga herself is represented as a tall woman yellow in complexion. She has ten arms each holding a weapon like a club, a bow, a battle axe or a symbol like a lotus flower a conch shell. In one of her hands, she holds the head of a demon whom she has slain. She is seated on a lion. The image is draped with a silk saree. Each limb is adorned with an ornament of a golden colour. On the right side of Durga stands Saraswati. On a lower pedestal is Ganesh. On the left side stands Lakshmi on a lower step Kartik. It is popularly believed that these are her children. The offering given to Durga are of all sorts. Any object which has value in the eyes of worshipper can be offered to her. Animal sacrifices also are offered. They are usually male goats

or male buffalos. The sword is one of the symbols of Durga worshipped along with her. There is a special hour for the offering of sacrifice. Time reckoned in terms of 1/72th part of a day or 20 minutes period. The sacrifice hour should fall within that specified period of twenty minutes. So utmost punctuality is observed to see that at the exact time the head is severed from the victim. On the tenth day the images are taken to the river bank and are dropped into the river and the goddess is bidden farewell to go to her husband's place. The common idea is Shiva the celestial being married Durga from the earth and that he sends her for ten days every year to her home.

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